

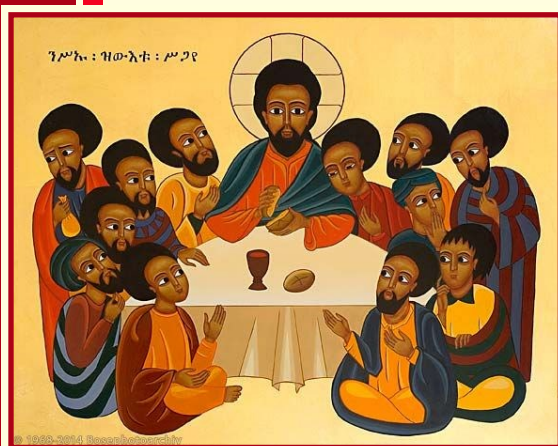
Reflection from the Superior General

Marist Communities – “united in one mind and one heart” in tough times

Here at “Villa Santa Maria” there are thirteen of us at home – ten Marists, one diocesan priest (stranded in Rome by cancelled flights) and two Syrian refugees, Malak and Raquan, who are long-term guests. The four Sisters from Mexico, too, are a gracious presence. Our staff is mostly working from home. We have hardly been out the front gate for seven weeks. It certainly helps us to focus on community life!

Even so, relatively speaking, we know we are blessed compared with so many other people all over the world who are often struggling terribly. We are also united in prayer and support for those in our communities who are grieving for confreres who have died recently, some of them from the virus. R.I.P.

These strange days can invite us to a deeper quality of community life. One confrere from America wrote to me yesterday: “Certainly right now I see the Lord calling us to live a completely different way of life in our community. We are praying much more, our time at table and our sharing of life and faith is increasing enormously”.



Some of the readings of Easter Season describe the early Christian communities. In Acts we hear about the early Christian community. They “shared all things in common”, “broke bread together at home” and praised God with generous hearts so that “day by day the Lord added to their number”. (Acts 2). Fr. Jean-Claude often referred to this early community: “We have no other model than the newborn Church. We must be like the Apostles: *cor unum et anima una*. They loved each other like brothers.” (F.S. 42,3)

Like the first disciples with Mary we, too, in our days “share all things in common”. We share everything we possess. We especially share our own lives, our strengths and our weaknesses. It can be difficult,

sometimes even painful, to share our lives day by day in community. However, if we share wholeheartedly, we enter into the Paschal Mystery right where we are. We believe that when we appreciate and affirm each other as brothers called by Mary, and forgive each other when we need to, then there will be the peace and New Life of the Risen Lord.

Most religious people, both Christians during Easter and Muslims during Ramadan, unable to gather for public liturgy, are praying at home right now – “the domestic Church”. So are we. Like the early Christians we “break bread together at home”. It can be challenging to come together day after day for prayer, just the same few faces. We need to hear at least one voice in our community pointing out “it is the Lord!” as we encourage each other in our search together for the Risen Christ.

“Day by day, the Lord added to their number”. So, too, our communities are called to be open and welcoming, in our own simple way. Firstly, we accept and welcome each other just as we are. We celebrate any life-giving occasion together, as inclusively as possible. Then, as far as we can, we reach out to welcome others around us, especially those who might be lonely.

Some of our confreres do not or cannot live in a Marist community, for whatever reason. Some are in care-homes. Others have ministries or life-experiences that demand that they live apart from community. Whatever our circumstances, we are all in one family, called by Mary to support each other “one in mind and heart” and so bring the Good News of the Resurrection of her Son to others.

“The Marist community provides a sign of what the Church is called to be in the world”. (Cons. 127).

May each Marist experience Easter peace profoundly, however or wherever we find ourselves!

John Larsen s.m.